THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE
- THE STATE NEWSPAPER -- MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Braxton Monster Left Skid Tracks Where He Landed

(Special to The Gazette)

SUTTON, Sept. 14—The phantom of Flatwoods:

Left tracks from six to eight feet apart.

Wore a suit of green armor.

Looked like a mechanical man.

Was 10 feet tall, four feet wide.

Had a blood-red face.

Sported a black, spade-like cowl which extended a foot or more above its head.

It had claw-like "toy" hands, too, and orange-green eyes the size of half-dollars, according to Mrs. Kathleen May, a 32-year-old beautician who saw the "thing" Friday night on a hillside near her home in nearby Flatwoods.

Mrs. May's two sons, Edward, 13, and Theodore, 12, saw it, too. So did Eugene Lemon, 17, Ronald Shaver, 10, Theodore Neal, 13, and Neal Nunley, 14, all of Flatwoods.

Today, somewhat recovered from the horror of their discovery Friday night, Mrs. May and the six boys who said they saw the monster, re-told the strange story.

This Is the Way It Was

Here's how it happened:

The younger boys were playing football at Flatwoods Friday night while Mrs. May and Lemon looked on. It was almost, but not quite, dark. Then, a weird light flashed through the skies of Braxton County like a flaming object of some kind which appeared to the seven witnesses to "land" on a nearby hillside. They set out to investigate.

It was dark when they reached the hillside, and Lemon produced a

(Continued From Page 1)

flashlight. Coming to the top of a ridge, he turned the beam down the slope. He stood frozen for a moment, then unloosed a frightened cry and fell backwards to the ground. Mrs. May and the children said they could easily see what had frightened young Lemon. But they all retreated hastily.

According to the beautician, who said "I got a good look at it," a monster was striding up the slope toward them, its orange-green pupil-less eyes glowing.

Well Lit Up

Although Lemon had dropped his flashlight, it didn't matter, for the monster carried its own illuminating system.

"It lit up like a Christmas tree," Mrs. May said, with some sort of interior lighting system.

The six other witnesses gave less-elaborate descriptions but swore to state police officers and to Sutton publisher A. Lee Stewart that they, indeed, had seen the "thing." Only Lemon could gather enough courage to accompany a shotgun-armed posse back to the scene Friday night, and he, said Stewart, was visably frightened.

Mrs. May went back to the scene today—and saw the "footprints." She, as well as Stewart, described them as skid-like depressions in the hillside brush, about six or eight feet apart. The "sickening, piercing" odor, which the witnesses said accompanied the monster's appearance Friday was still slightly in evidence, Mrs. May said. She also pointed out that she had acquired some grease or oil stains on her white beautician's uniform while in the area today. Searchers could find no other evidence of a visit by the phantom.

Stewart, co-publisher of the Braxton Democrat at Sutton has promised, however, to keep himself informed of any new developments in the case—unless a strange, green, claw-like hand mysteriously lifts his notes from his desk.

16*The Charleston Gazette Monday, Sept. 15, 1952

THE MONSTER STOOD right on the spot where Mrs. Kathleen May and these six boys pose for the photographer, according to their stories. Shown are Mrs. May, her two sons, Edward and Theodore, and Eugene Lemon, Ronald Shaver, Theodore Neal and Neal Nunley, all of Flatwoods, Braxton County. They're standing pat on their story that they saw a huge, green monster on this spot Friday night following the flight of a meteorite through West Virginia skies. (Photo for The Gazette by A. Lee Stewart)

3--The Charleston Gazette Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1952

'Monster' Held Illusion Created by Meteor's Gas

The "Braxton County Monster" has been described by a local insurance man and amateur astronomer as an illusion created by the remains of a gaseous meteor.

He is Earl Stephens of nearby Belle, whose theory is one of the best offered here on the origin of "the thing" that scared the daylights out of a Braxton County family.

Six Theory was advanced after on of Flatwoods returned from New York where they described their experience before a nation-wide television audience.

Mrs. Kathleen May and Gene Lem-

It is Stephens opinion that the meteor, commonly called a fire ball, originated from an electrical discharge in the outer atmosphere, formimt the shape of a gaseous nail.

Odor of Sulphur

"The odor of sulphur was the tip-off," declared Stephens. "It burns with a green flame accounting for the green apparition the people saw."

Stephens said one of the party apparently flashed the light on the gas ball just the instant before it disintegrated into thin air. The reflection of the light on the gases gave it the shape the people described, he said.

The "monster" story came to light a week ago after reports that Mrs. May Lemon and four youths ran smack into the thing while searching for a strange object they saw floating into the woods near their home.

They described the monster as about eight feet tall, with red eyes and a green body, topped by a strange pointed mantle.

However, during a thorough search of the area by experts officials the next day only the sulphurous odor remained.

Facts Support Theory

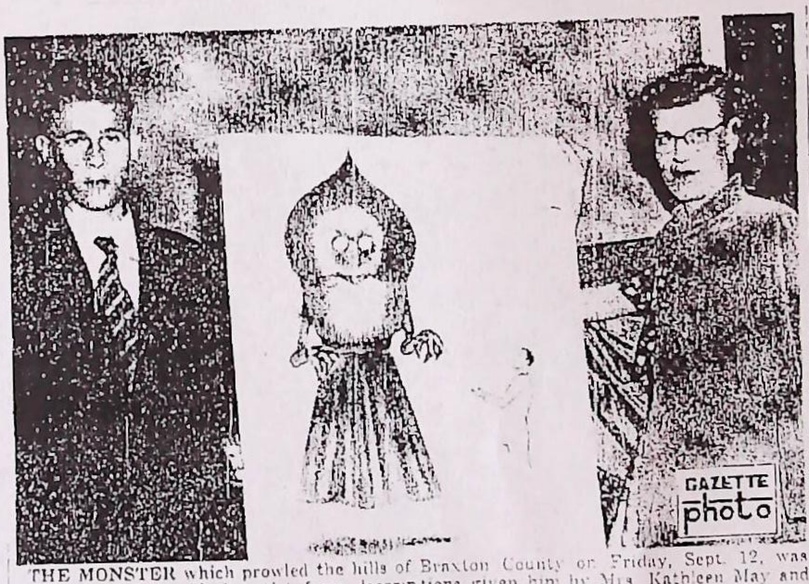
Stephens said his theory is backed up by the fact the earth entered a meteoric stream on Aug. 24. He believes the gaseous body may have been ripped from Big as Comet which has been splitting up during recent years, showering the earth with its fragments.

During the same period several local residents observed a strange luminous body that was believed to have fallen within a 50-mile radius of Charleston.

His gaseous theory is further bolstered by the stories of two residents of rural St. Albans who declared they saw a [illegible] float lazily to the ground and [illegible] disappear.

A search of that area by the Gazette reporters [illegible] up any trace of the [illegible] Stephens theory.

The Gazette, in [illegible] be termed "[illegible]" [illegible] fear of supernatural [illegible] the minds of the [illegible]



THE MONSTER which prowled the hills of Braxton County on Friday, Sept. 12, was drawn by a New York artist from descriptions given him by Mrs. Kathleen May and Gene Lemon, Flatwoods residents who said they saw the "thing." The two witnesses, with A. Lee Stewart, Jr., Sutton publisher, told their experiences on "We The People" television show in New York Friday night. The artist's conception was featured on the program with a background of weird music. Lemon and Mrs. May hold the portrait which they say is "quite acucrate." The photo was taken in Charleston at the Greyhound bus terminal.

Flatwoods Phantom Gave Braxton Folks Something To Talk About Two Years Ago

By HOLT BYRNE
Editor, The Braxton Central

Two years have passed since that fateful evening of Sept. 12, 1952, when a group of boys and a Flatwoods (W. Va) mother witnessed a mysterious "monster" described as being "about 10 feet tall, with a face of fiery red, a green body and a headpiece which looked like the ace of spades."

Two years have passed since the story of "The Phantom of Flatwoods" was flashed all over the civilized world by way of the press and radio to become what the press services rated as the No. 11 news story of the year.

In that time, especially in recent months, the story has been more or less forgotten by many . . . a story which captivated the interest and imagination of people all over the United States and brought visitors from all parts of the country to talk with those who witnessed the object and to inspect the ground where it was seen.

Millions of words were written by newspapers and magazines of the bizarre "monster" seen by Mrs. Kathleen May and her two sons, Eddie and Freddie, Ronny Shaver, Tommy Hyer, Gene Lemons and Neil Nunley atop a hill in back of the Bailey Fisher property in Flatwoods.

With all the words that have been written and spoken, the story of "The Phantom of Flatwoods" has not been explained. In all probability it never will.

Two things are certain, however: There is no doubt that a meteor of considerable proportion flashed across the heavens that Friday night of Sept. 12, 1952, being visible in at least three states—Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

SAW 'SOMETHING'

Likewise, there is no doubt but that Mrs. May and the young men with her, witnessed some sort of "object" of unusual proportions, hideously made up and lighted.

The story had its beginning at approximately 7:15 p. m. on the evening of Sept. 12 when the meteor was seen passing over Flatwoods. Four youngsters were playing football on the grade school playground at the time, watched the object pass through the skies and noted that it appeared to have dropped on the hilltop of the Fisher farm.

They considered the possibility that it was a "Flying Saucer" and immediately set out to investigate. At the home of Mrs. May they stopped and asked Mrs. May and her two sons to accompany them up the hill to look for the "Saucer."

As the group neared the hill, Mrs. May said the air became foggy and misty and that a peculiar metallic odor which burned their nostrils and hurt their eyes was prevalent.

As the group reached the crest of the hill, Mrs. May said she saw a huge ball of fire some 100 yards away, pulsing light and making a slight hissing sound. She and the young men with her all estimated that the ball must have been at least 10 feet or more in diameter. They continued to follow a path around the hill which would have brought them within about 50 feet of the glowing object.

As they walked along, Mrs. May said that suddenly, to their left and about 75 feet from the glowing object, there appeared two lights resembling powerful flashlights which seemed to be about a foot apart. One of the boys turned his flashlight on the lights and there stood a huge man-like creature which Mrs. May said looked to be about 10 feet in height and four feet in width.

BRIGHT RED FACE

Describing the spectacle, she said it had "a bright red face, bright green clothing, a head which resembled the ace of spades and its clothing from the waist down hung in great folds."

As they saw the object, Mrs. May said it appeared to be "moving toward us as if it were floating through the air." The viewers immediately took flight and ran to the May home where a call was made to the then sheriff of Braxton County, Robert Carr.

Sheriff Carr and his deputy, Burbell Long, were answering another call at the time, however, and were down Elk River below Gassaway investigating a report that a "small cub airplane" had crashed into a hillside on the south side of the river.

This call to the sheriff had been made by Woodrow Eagle of Duck, who said that he saw an object which resembled a small airplane crash into a mountainside. A search by the officers failed to disclose any evidence of such an accident. Upon their return to Sutton, the sheriff immediately went to Flatwoods to investigate Mrs. May's report. In the meantime, however, a large number of Flatwoods people had gone to the hilltop to investigate and any evidence of the visit of the creature had been destroyed.

The day following the incident, Mrs. May said:

"It was a hideous sight and I would give anything I own if I had not seen it." Her thoughts were echoed by those who accompanied her on the trip up the hill.

Never in the history of Braxton County has so much interest been centered on an incident as there was on the story of the "Phantom of Flatwoods." Newspaper stories were carried throughout the country, radio broadcasts were carried on large networks, and hundreds of phone calls were received from all parts of the country.

SCIENTIST CALLS

One call came from a scientist in Newfoundland, asking for a description of the creature; another came from a cheese company in Wisconsin asking if it possibly could have been an inflated rubber cow which had been launched about ten days previously as an advertising stunt. Other calls came from Pittsburgh, New York and Washington newspapers.

Hundreds of persons came personally to have a look and to talk with those who had witnessed the phenomena. One of the Pittsburgh dailies sent a special writer to cover the event; a minister from Brooklyn, N. Y., came to talk with Mrs. May and the youngsters to see if their description was the same as one he had visioned in a dream some years ago; Fate Magazine, which deals with true stories of the strange and the unknown, sent Gray Barker, a native of Braxton County, to find out what he could about the story.

Of all those who came to personally investigate, probably only one was qualified to conduct such an investigation as the story of the "Flatwoods Phantom" presented. He was Ivan Sanderson of New York City, known the world over as a scientist and investigator of strange and unusual phenomena. With his assistant, Eddie Schoenenberger, he arrived in Sutton a few days following the appearance of the monster to make a complete and thorough study of the event.

Mr. Sanderson, it might be stated, has traveled the world over making studies of the strange, the unusual and the different from ordinary happenings. He is a writer and lecturer of considerable note and is a quite frequent guest on nation-wide television and radio shows.

SANDERSON ARRIVES

Upon arrival here, Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Schoenenberger immediately began a systematic study of the events. Aerial maps of the area were obtained, a preliminary study of the area where the alleged monster was seen was made and five of the young men who had witnessed the "Phantom" were interviewed. Realizing that a full-scale investigation was warranted, by persons of qualified status, Mr. Sanderson contacted Earl Walter and Bert Ash, members of the Charleston chapter of the National Speleogolical Society, who came to Sutton to assist with the investigation.

The following morning a thorough investigation of the field where the appearance of the monster was noted was made by Mr. Sanderson and his assistants. The ground was gone over in great detail, covering several acres in as thorough a manner as possible. The boys who witnessed the phenomena were again interviewed and cross - questioned, individually, in pairs, and as a group. Following this, a number of residents of the community were interviewed.

In the afternoon the investigators moved on to Gassaway where Anderson Hughes was interviewed. Mr. Hughes pointed out the spot where Woodrow Eagle had said another flaming object, which he thought was a burning plane, had crashed. A boat was obtained with which to cross the river and for four hours the group searched the forested slopes without success. Later Mr. Eagle was contacted and retold his story of the previous evening regarding what he believed was a burning plane which had crashed into the hillside.

At Frametown J. C. Dean was contacted and it was learned that still another aerial object had crashed or landed on a nearby farm. Mr. Dean said this example had landed on an overgrown and isolated field at the top of a hill known as James' Knob but that, although seen by the two young James boys, had not been investigated because it had been regarded as a "fireball."

The following day Mr. Sanderson met with the Charleston chapter of the National Speleological Society and was informed by Mrs. Alice Williams that she had witnessed the disintegration of still another fiery object in the air at a height of not more than a few hundred feet to the West of Charleston. This was also witnessed by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence McClane and they affirmed that when the object disintegrated "a lot of ashes fell to the ground."

FIVE OBJECTS

All of these events, Mr. Sanderson determined, occurred within a matter of minutes, leading him to surmise that "at least five objects came over travelling in a straight line from west of north to east of south, at just about five miles apart." This deduction was made by carefully reviewing aerial maps of the area.

In his preliminary report on the subject, Mr. Sanderson pointed out that these five objects, starting from the east end of the line (Flatwoods) assumed the following course:

No. 1—passed east of Flatwoods and was seen south of the Sutton Airport;

No. 2—Crashed in or landed in Flatwoods (Green 'Man');

No. 3—Crashed at Sugar Creek;

No. 4—Crashed or landed at Frametown;

No. 5—Headed for Charleston and disintegrated in the air over the city.

"All these incidents," he said, "occurred simultaneously as far as I can ascertain. If the things didn't take off again or dissolve into gas, there ought to be some residue, or at least a charged or crushed spot."

Later, following a more comprehensive study of the material acquired during his investigation, Mr. Sanderson issued a report which consisted of 26 typewritten pages on the subject. The report was carried by newspapers all over the United States and appeared in at least one British newspaper.

At the time of the alleged monster's appearance, three possible explanations were put forth by local people, noted by Mr. Sanderson as follows:

(1) A school teacher said that it might be a "combination of the light from a nearby plane beacon and the fiery trail of the blazing meteor reflected in some manner to take the shape of a glowing monster."

(2) The second "endorsed by a noted scientist" is that in passing over Flatwoods the meteorite threw off a particle that fell to the ground. This . . . would disintegrate and turn to vapour and this might rise in the form of a monster."

(3) The third was derived from a man who had a nasty experience some years before, seeing an apparition one night and noting the death of a man the next. A minister of religion was killed in an auto accident in the vicinity a few days later.

"The fatouness of the first two need hardly be pointed out," Mr. Sanderson explains. "As concluded from the information available, it took the boys about 20 minutes to reach the hilltop site from the football ground in the valley and the object was still there. No meteor fragment would glow that long. How a combination of a distant beacon light (and there are three in sight all the time on that hilltop) and the tail of a 'meteor' that had passed over 20 minutes before could create a floating green entity is beyond comprehension."

SUMS IT UP

In recapitulating his studies, Mr. Sanderson said two things regarding the story are fairly clear. First, that something very unusual and normally inexplicable appears to have been seen by seven (and perhaps eight) sane people at Flatwoods about 7:15 p. m. on the evening of Sept. 12. Secondly, the details of what they saw and even of who saw the phenomenon were grossly misreported, while the normal amount of worthless conjecture was added. There are, he added, a number of both important and worthwhile points that stand out in these reports. These may be summarized as follows:

(1) There were unexplained objects in the sky over Maryland and West Virginia, and possibly Pennsylvania, that night about Sundown.

(2) Something that gave light landed at Flatwoods and another at Sugar Creek, near Gassaway, that evening.

(3) Seven or eight people inspected the former and at least five of them were juveniles (This is very important).

(4) Woodrow Eagle of Duck saw something crash in flames on a wooded hillside at Sugar Creek, and was sufficiently convinced that it was a construction, to call the sheriff, who investigated.

"Beyond this," the report stated, "nobody should be prepared to go on the evidence presented by these reports. Everything further that was reported was or might have been pure conjecture. Nevertheless, these four points should be sufficiently strong when taken in combination, to prompt any seasoned investigator to pay the location a visit. This we did, and what we then encountered tells an almost entirely different and extremely peculiar story.

"If this is not the explanation, then somebody has to explain two things, namely:

"(a) What did the people see at Flatwoods, and

"(b) what happened to it?"

Regardless of what "the thing" may have been, or how it occurred after two years it is still an event that is vividly imprinted in the minds of those who witnessed the visitation of the "Phantom of Flatwoods."

The Charleston Daily Mail

"Today's News Today"

D PRESS, UNITED PRESS
NEWS, AP SPORTS WIRE

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA, SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1954

Sanderson-Flatwoods Interview Timeline

(Note- Hugh McPherson narrates the very beginning and end of the tape.
McPherson, Nebel, and Sanderson were all friends and/or associates)

Hugh McPherson (All-Night Radio Show on WCHS Charleston, WV) **1951-1970?**

Long John Nebel (Radio Show on WOR, WNBC, & WMCA in NY) **1952-1975?**

Flatwoods (Braxton County, WV) UFO Incident-**1952**

Ivan Sanderson's on-scene Flatwoods Investigation-**1952**

Long John Nebel's Interview of Ivan Sanderson at WOR in NY- **1953**
(Nebel conducted this interview at McPherson's request)

Hugh McPherson's rebroadcast of Sanderson's 1953 interview on the 16th anniversary of the 1952 Flatwoods encounter- **1968**

Hugh McPherson (with Harry Belafonte) at WCHS in 1950s

Long John Nebel at WOR in 1963

Ivan T. Sanderson (circa 1965)

Gary - the recording is fine Linie can be confusing. I put this together to help clarify "who" "where" and "when".

Mike

UFO NEWSCLIPPING JAN 1996 #318

Pioneer Press, St Paul, MN 2 NOV 1995

By Carole Baker

On two consecutive nights recently, a Gulf Breeze resident was witness to amber colored triangular light patterns in the skies over Gulf Breeze.

Driving home from work on the night of Thursday, November 30 at about midnight, he was driving east on 98 near Tiger Point. To his right, or south of Hwy. 98, he saw an amber configuration of lights with an amber configuration of lights with an undefined, cloudy amber light within the triangle. "The lights themselves were very clear, although not real bright. They were definitely not flares, there was no smoke coming from them and they were steady in the sky, not falling or drifting at all," the witness told me. "I just looked at it and then it was gone." Continuing on his drive home, he kept looking at the sky hoping to see the lights appear once more, but they did not. The sighting lasted about 10 seconds and the triangle appeared at about 10 degrees above the horizon, not far above the tree line. The witness described the size of the triangle at arm's length as being "about the size of a quarter."

The next night, the witness was again returning home from work. At approximately 11:30 p.m. on Friday, December 1, he was driving east on 98 close to the junction of College Blvd. when he saw a similar triangular configuration in the sky. "This time it was on the other, north side of 98" the witness states, "it looked exactly the same as the one I saw the night before." This evening, the configuration appeared higher in the sky, at about 30 degrees elevation. "It just blinked on. It was the same triangle of lights, with that same indistinct cloudy glow inside. It just stayed there in the sky for about five seconds and then just blinked off. It did not move in the sky or fade out." The witness stated that on both evenings, he had not noticed any aircraft in the sky before or after the sightings. "The second night, I was really looking as I drove along, noticing the stars and looking for planes or anything. I was really surprised when I saw the triangle again."

The witness estimated that on both occasions he was about five miles the triangles, but this is hard to estimate.

This is not the first time this witness has seen something unidentified in the sky. He was witness, along with hundreds of other people to an unusual "red light" sighting that took place during the firework display in Pensacola on July 4, 1992.

To report a sighting, please call the Pensacola/Gulf Breeze MUFON Hotline at 438-3261.

For information of the upcoming 1996 Gulf Breeze Conference, please call Project Awareness at 432-8888. The Conference will be held March 15-17 at the Clarion Resort on Pensacola Beach. Speakers will include Whitley Strieber, Dr. John Mack, Dr. Edith Piore, Dr. Michael Grosso and more. Keep Looking Up!

Far Out

Legitimate scientists gathered here this week to discuss UFOs. Among their beliefs: UFOs are a legitimate issue for investigation and for public funding.

Above: Many people wh... claim... hav...

...the photographic evidence taken by people around the world — from Italy to Mexico to Arizona — over the past 45 years that many people believe argues for the existence of UFOs.

"The UFO problem is an absolutely ideal model for demonstrating how vulnerable science is to politics because it points out what happens to scientific inquiry when that inquiry moves out to the edges of the mainstream."

CHUCK PENSON
SCIENCE MUSEUM OF MINNESOTA

By Anne Brataas
STAFF WRITER

...adical science came to St. Paul earlier this week, when some 150 people from around the country met at the Radisson Hotel for the second annual conference on the Science and Politics of UFO Research, sponsored by the Science Museum of Minnesota. Among their beliefs:

■ UFOs are real — but the nature of the phenomenon is unknown. Are they from outer space? Are they advanced craft made and tested secretly by the United States or other governments? Are they from other dimensions? Are they a combination of these?

■ UFOs are a legitimate topic for mainstream scientists to investigate and the public to fund, just as researchers work to understand AIDS, moon landings and climate change. Only this kind of effort will produce the evidence to ultimately prove — or disprove — their existence and understand their significance.

■ Scientific discussions of UFOs have been sub...ted by a systematic effort of the U.S. govern...bunk UFOs since 1947. Why would a ...ther to foil rational debate on the ... policy makers fear the public will ... government that cannot explain or ...nomenon.

...dly cannot now; no one can.

...e people — many at the conference were scientists and academics working in the mainstream — even attempt explanations is a decidedly radical act; they risk isolation and ridicule.

Says Chuck Penson, director of the Computer Education Center at the Science Museum of Minnesota and one of the conference's coordinators:

"The goal of this conference was to give people insight into how the process of scientific discovery works in the real world. A lot of people have the notion that science and scientists are open-minded and want to get at the truth at any cost and will stop at nothing to find out the real nature of something. And that's just not the case, which comes as a shock to many people.

The UFO problem is an absolutely ideal model for demonstrating how vulnerable science is to politics because it points out what happens to scientific inquiry when that inquiry moves out to the edges of the mainstream. Because it cannot control UFOs, early on, the government decided to put UFOs in the most ludicrous light possible in a careful program to debunk them and to encourage a lunatic fringe around them — and it has been very, very successful at it."

Consider some of the presentations offered by speakers at the two-day conference as they attempt to explain why the public does not

(continued on page 10)

(continued from page 9 - PIONEER PRESS, St. Paul, MN - Nov. 2, 1995)

receive rational information about UFOs. Instead, the public learns about UFOs by hysterical tabloid treatment and fantastic movie screenplays:

■ Researcher Ann Druffel describes the work of the late Dr. James E. McDonald, an Arizona government atmospheric physicist who began to investigate UFOs on the side in the 1950s and 1960s.

Reviewing Air Force records — and reports from U.S. Navy sonar logs of underwater UFOs — and interviewing crew members who experienced odd things, McDonald found "hundreds of reports that had been written off as absurd," Druffel says. "Solid reports of craftlike objects. Many cases were described as metallic objects doing hard-to-believe maneuvers. They were written off as stars, garages, etc." Most reports consisted of eye-witness accounts, photographs and radar information.

McDonald also compared the Air Force "Blue Book" files — its own internal investigation of UFO sightings — with oral accounts of sightings. He found that the Blue Book files were incomplete. This made him suspicious of a good-faith effort on the part of the Air Force.

When the Air Force named a Colorado researcher, Edward Condon, to take over the Blue Book project, McDonald sent Condon a list of 100 best cases to investigate — only to learn later that Condon had little interest in asking scientific questions about them. Instead, Condon ridiculed them and eventually authored a report concluding — but not proving — that UFOs were not worthy of further study. This became the basis of official U.S. government policy.

"McDonald was dismayed," researcher Druffel says. "After the Condon report, McDonald became its most vocal critic."

McDonald did succeed in getting the topic of UFOs scheduled for debate before the U.S. House of Representatives in July 1968. "He reasoned that the hearing could finally bring UFOs up as a scientific topic," Druffel says.

But with the impending November elections, too many politicians became fearful of the effect discussing UFOs would have on their chances for re-election, and the hearings ended.

"This was the first and last time UFOs were discussed in the U.S. Congress," Druffel says.

McDonald died in June 1971. It was just several months after he appeared before Congress to discuss a new problem of atmospheric pollution: the emerging ozone hole. Says Druffel: "He was openly ridiculed at the hearings. Not for ozone, but for his UFO work."

■ Dr. Bruce Maccabee, an optical physicist with the Naval Surface Weapons Lab, has examined hundreds of photographs and videos of reported UFOs. In his analyses, he determines if the images have been doctored — are deliberate hoaxes — or if there are optical anomalies, solar or atmospheric properties that can explain them.

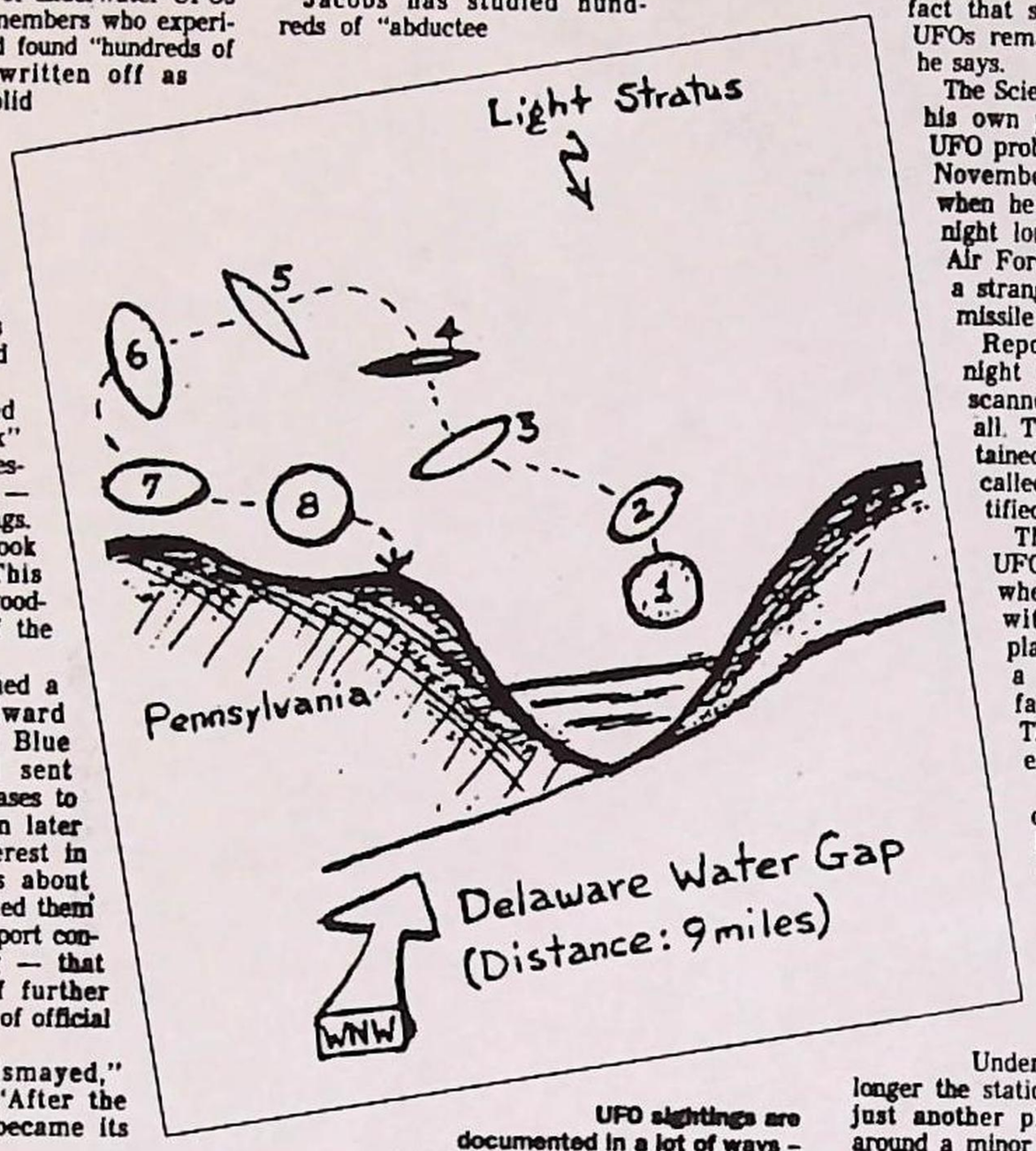
Once they pass the test as reliable images, he uses elements of the photos — such as landmarks, position and angle of the sun and shadows or cloud movement — to mathematically produce characteristics of the craft, such as size, shape, speed and direction of travel.

Patterns keep appearing. One such image is an egg-shaped object about 26 feet wide and 13 feet high with a skirt of spheres — fuel tanks? — ringing it, traveling at speeds and in a manner the laws of physics as now known do not predict or explain.

Says Maccabee: "The point is, when they put the pedal to the metal, they go right through the metal. Good luck — we're going to need it."

■ Historian Dr. David M. Jacobs from Temple University studies people who believe they have been abducted by operators of UFOs, then returned to Earth. This is a highly controversial area within the study of UFOs. Not everyone who believes UFOs exist and are deserving of systematic scientific inquiry believes that abductions are real.

Jacobs has studied hundreds of "abductee



UFO sightings are documented in a lot of ways – and quick sketches are common. This one was made by zoologist Ivan T. Sanderson Oct. 2, 1958 in a sighting near Blairstown, N.J. (Courtesy of Center for UFO Studies).

eports." He also has participated in Roper public opinion polls in which a random sample of 6,000 people were asked if they have ever been abducted by aliens. According to those results, about 5 million Americans believe they have been. Jacobs thinks that something very unusual happened to a lot of these people; he just can't say what exactly.

A common theme of abduction reports are that sane and sober people suddenly notice they have substantial amounts of time — two hours, say — missing that they can't explain. After it, they are troubled, but they don't know why.

Under hypnosis they recount tales of being examined on operating tables by aliens in what appears to be some sort of reproductive or genetic research program. The communication is done psychically with aliens, who erase nearly all memory from the abducted people before releasing them.

Descriptions of the aliens vary. Some are small and gray with elephantlike skin. Others have a pointed, oval face with large, dark almond-shaped eyes and a small nose. No one really knows their motives or goals — or whether they are friends or foes.

Says Jacobs: "Critics say that these abductees just want to be on "Oprah" and that they get their ideas from UFO researchers, not from personal experience." But, he adds, even if the Roper polls are wrong by 75 percent — that's still about 1 million Americans who believe they have been abducted by UFOs.

"We're at an odd phase in abduction research," he says. "The sky is no longer the landscape on which the battle with UFOs is being fought; now, it's the landscape of the mind."

Just what kind of minds are these, anyway?

Says Jacobs: "There is a wacko element that's always with us — it comes with the territory."

But sensationalism can't detract from the fact that serious scientific questions about UFOs remain to be answered scientifically, he says.

The Science Museum's Penson remembers his own period of skepticism about the UFO problem. It ended 20 years ago on a November night in Great Falls, Mont., when he listened to a police scanner all night long while a sheriff, deputies and Air Force officials talked about sighting a strange glowing object over a nuclear missile silo.

Reports of the object crackled all night long on ham radios and police scanners, and Penson followed them all. The next day, the newspaper contained a few short paragraphs on it. It called the glowing object "an unidentified helicopter."

This worried him more than a UFO. "I don't know about you, but when I hear officials are content with the explanation that unexplained helicopters are flying over a highly secured military nuclear facility, I get pretty concerned. That was an eye-opening experience for me."

He likens the UFO problem to other great controversies in the history of science. Galileo, for example, in 17th century Italy. Galileo practiced radical science by challenging church authorities for freedom of scientific inquiry and by supporting the Copernican system of astronomy.

Under this system, the Earth is no longer the stationary center of the universe — just another planet among many revolving around a minor sun. This was a troubling view to church officials at the time who believed it diminished humankind's role and God's plan. A church commission convened to study the Earth's motion found the Copernican system and Galileo's support of it heretical, ordered him to stop teaching it and ultimately imprisoned him for writing about it.

Says Penson: "Imagine if Galileo's research had been funded by a grant from the Pope with the understanding that anything he learned would be the exclusive property of the church. This is where we are today with Big Science and government policy on the UFO problem. There is tremendous resistance to change in the scientific community."

But there is also tremendous curiosity that can surmount resistance. Penson encourages people to learn about UFOs by reading about them in sources other than tabloids.

Says Penson: "I don't understand what the big problem is, why this subject is so untouchable in the mainstream. I personally, would like to know the truth. But the politics of science funding make it very difficult for scientists to study this. As a country, we invested billions of dollars in the space program and can point to things like Velcro that we got from it that affect everyday life. It isn't like that with UFOs. We might not get Velcro. Then again, we might get better than Velcro."

For a UFO bibliography or videotape copy of the conference speakers, call the Science Museum of Minnesota Education Division at 221-4742.

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UFO Buffs: They Are Not Alone

By Christopher Smith
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

MESQUITE, Nev. — There is a heated discussion in the hotel lobby about anti- ...ision. In the ...

to an American Indian who claims his grandfather rescued an injured alien from a crashed spaceship.

They are here to buy videos like the "UFO-Bigfoot Connection" or "Count-